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Dillinger: the Untold Story

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surrounded them. The book is full of rich details, such as her mother's delight in her new Hoosier cabinet, her own wonder at the family christening dress, and the work and pride that went into preparing meals for the men who came each year to thresh. Some vignettes, such as the one detailing the local reaction to a neighbor's house fire, beautifully illustrate the sense of community Onerheim experienced in her childhood. The book also captures the tension between farm and town children, and the emotional and physical distance separating rural and urban locales.

Threads of Memory is a pleasant read. For those interested in the history of rural Iowa and the United States in the 1920s, it will provide an intimate portrait of farm life in that era. Family photographs enrich the text. Although the quality of the narrative is somewhat uneven, it is consistently enjoyable and obviously written from the heart. Onerheim has written a book that should prove interesting to the professional and lay historian alike.

Dillinger: The Untold Story, by G. Russell Girardin with William J. Helmer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. xix, 345 pp. Illustrations, notes, chronology, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DOUGLAS WERTSCH, ATHENS STATE COLLEGE

As is commonly true of books blaring this one's subtitle, Girardin and Helmer's book is short on "untold" and long on "story." *Dillinger* is not a history; it is a true-crime biography of an infamous midwestern criminal. Still, it is not without interest. Written by a Dillinger enthusiast shortly after the gangster's FBI-sponsored death in 1934, the narrative is highly individualistic yet readable in a quirky sort of way. Helmer's periodic contributions are useful in placing Girardin's account in historical context.

In writing about events set almost entirely in the Middle West, the authors remind readers of that region's often desperate struggle during the Great Depression. Dillinger's fame rested as much on the sympathies of beleaguered midwesterners as on J. Edgar Hoover's self-aggrandizing public relations campaign. Of particular interest to readers of the *Annals of Iowa* is the book's description of the March 1934 robbery of the First National Bank of Mason City, Iowa. Bank President Willis G. C. Bagley's eyewitness account of the holdup is riveting and will prove of equal interest to the book's revelations about the events surrounding the bank robber's demise in Chicago four months later. Anyone interested in midwestern history presented in a light vein will not be disappointed in *Dillinger: The Untold Story*.

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